1: Rosen E-5 (1901-1902) 1924 SK6 Choroti SK6

I never heard the Choroti sing or play any real melody; as I have already pointed out, the musical sense of these Indians appears to be exceedingly rudimentary. But when they are beating their magic drums (fig. 167), or using their magic rattles (fig. 170), one perceives that they are by no means lacking in a sense of rythm. 533

The drums as well as the rattles are of a magical character; both are principally used at incantations and magic dances. 534 [789]

The magic drum consists of an earthenware vessel which is partly filled with water, and covered over with a piece of skin. The skin is tied round the mouth of the vessel with a string of caraguatá (fig. 167). A single drumstick is always used. Drumsticks are of wood, and usually carved; sometimes they have metal mountings (figs. 168 and 169). When the drum is to be used, it is usually stood on a ring of straw which is placed on the ground.

Fig. 168. Drumstick, of wood, with a small tin-plate mounting. Choroti. Gran Chaco. Bolivia. 1/2. Riksm. 03. 3. 304.

Drums consisting of clay pots with skin stretched over them have also been in use in North America. According to some early authors, such drums were not beaten with the bare hand, but with a drumstick: thus they were in this respect handled in the same manner as by the Choroti.[1] As to whether the North American drums were also partly filled with water, I am not able to say, as in the literature I have found no information on that point.

Fig. 169. Drumstick, of wood with ring shaped tin mountings. Choroti. Gran Chaco. Bolivia. 1/2. Riksm. 03. 3 308.

In a previous work I have endeavoured to show that, among the Choroti, water was put into the drums for the purpose of tuning them to the pitch that was wanted.[2] This detail of information, which I had from the Choroti themselves, is in all probability correct. Karsten, however, offers a different explanation. He is of opinion that the water is poured into the clay-pot drums exclusively for reasons

[1] See for example Holmes (1), p. 34 and fig. 4.
[2] von Rosen (2), p. 12.

1: Rosen E-5 (1901-1902) 1924 SK6 Choroti SK6

535 centres on them. It is for them that they paint and deck themselves out.
302 At these balls the young Indian tries to appear as elegantly apparelled, as originally painted and decorated, as possible. Each day he paints himself after a different fashion, and arranges his ornaments differently. — These gentry, upon growing into older, staid, married men, no longer adorn themselves for ball parties, but only for war. — As to the Choroti girls, I have often seen them anointing their bodies with fish oil, which imparts to then an unpleasant smell. Their own opinion on this point is
[832] no doubt a very different one. To their thinking, we Europeans have an offensive cow smell. The level of elegance affected by the men is never
535 attained by the women. Still, they are, however, able to make the consoling reflection that it is, anyhow, in the first place for their sake that the lords of creation spend several hours of the day on their toilet.

»As has been said, it is in dancing that the whole interest of the young men and the young women centres. When the sun has set, then it begins. In a circle, or in a single rank, the men dance, marking the time by singing, may be: 'Tãe-a sa-lé, tãe-a-sa lé'. As the rhythm of the singing is slow or quick, so is the dancing. Music is a thing unknown at these
[533] dances. The chants that are sung are untranslateable refrains, which often are international, i. e., are used by many different tribes. The girls dance behind the men. Among the Choroti Indians it is the girl who takes the
[832] initiative in the matter of amatory ventures. She simply carries off with her, from the ball, any particular young man whom she may want as her lover for the night. These dances made a grand spectacle, as the moon, or a bonfire of pampas grass, shone on the gleaming bodies, I have seen as many as a hundred men form a dancing circle. At times the dance went quite slowly; at times it would go at a breakneck speed, raising clouds of dust, so that all one could see was a whirling melée of bodies and waving ostrich plumes.«

535 Of the dances of the Chaco Indians,[1] those that are obviously magical
789 are mainly performed as ceremonies of exorcism against dreaded spirits who have it in their power to cause illness or death; according to Karsten, magié dances are also resorted to in order to enhance the supply of wild, edible fruits.[2]

[1] Extract from Nordenskiöld (13), pp. 73, 75—77, and 79.
[2] Karsten (1).
[3] Karsten (4), pp. 25–28.

1: Rosen E-5 (1901-1902) 1924 SK6 Choroti SK6

of older origin that conception of things supernatural, wherefore it follows 000
that purely decorative art must be older that magic art.

In the course of time, ornaments have, from a variety of reasons, become attributed with magical properties, *without having, on that account, necessarily lost their character of being ornaments.*[1] At a still later stage it happens that the supernatural properties that once were ascribed to the objects are considered unimportant, and therefore by degrees fall into oblivion. Probably the Choroti will soon arrive at this stage of development in respect of their ornamental objects, and thus Karsten has rendered a very important service to science by having »fixed», so to speak, this stage of the evolution of Choroti culture, even if he, as is my opinion, at times overshoots the mark by giving undue prominence to the magic side of the question.

Singing, dancing, drum-beating and rattle-shaking are by the Choroti 789
regarded as potent in incantation and exorcism. This is a well known 533
fact, to which I have also referred on pp. 182, 183 in my account of a funeral dance which took place in a Choroti village.[2] That blowing a kind of disc shaped whistle is done for the purpose of driving away evil spirits I have already mentioned (p. 144). As regards the supposed magical character of a game of chance called »chuke», I also beg to refer to what I have said in the foregoing (see p. 155).

A popular belief, which is to be met with practically all over the world, 826
is that the mental and physical force in man is in some supernatural way centred in the hair of his head. As an instance of this, Karsten refers back to the well known legend about Samson, the hero who lost his strength as soon as Delilah had shorn him of his hair. Among us Northeners, as among other European peoples, the belief has also existed

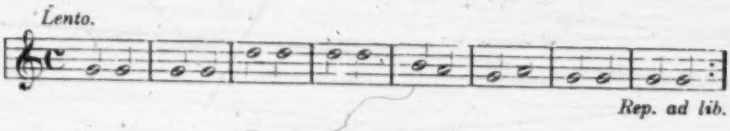
[1] It is, inter alia, from Stolpe's works — e. g. Stolpe (1) — a well known fact that these cmingly purely geometrical ornaments of primitive peoples often can be traced to symbolic pictography. But »symbolic pictures may, in their turn, have been developed out of geometrical designs. »Von den Steinen is now of opinion that a whole group of so called geometrical ornaments have evolved from textile designs, but that they, in being transposed from plaited or woven work to other materials, and carried out in engraving or painting, then embarked upon an independent existence, finally carrying with them a whole series of the most varied pictorial ideas, according to the requirements of the artist's inspiration, and that these latter creations had no essential connexion with the original geometrical designs.» The passage within the quotation marks is a summary made by Seler of von den Steinen's opinion as regards certain ornaments. Seler (1), p. 48.

[2] Cf. also Karsten (4), p. 152 (1), pp. 14, 33 and 34 (2), bottom picture in plate following p. 32, and Nordenskiöld (13), pp. 89—91, and 105.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco

Choroti SK6

Kausima dance is always obligatory. Thus in a case which came under my notice the dance was performed by a middle-aged woman who, holding the dancing-staff (*káhuis*) in her right hand, proceeded with slow regular steps backwards and forwards in front of the house, where the girl, in whose »honour» the dance was performed, was sitting motionless. The woman accompanied her dance with a peculiar monotonous chant marking time, as usual, with the *káhuis*. Sometimes one of the small girls went and joined her, holding the dancing-staff together with her and walking in the same time. The dance and chant was begun at sunset and continued with short intervals till midnight. The melody of the chant which was repeated over and over again, was the following:



It is evident that the object of the dance was to drive away or keep off the evil *möhsek* who were trying to harm the girl.

Exactly the same custom prevails among the neighbours of the Choroti in the south, the Ashluslay Indians, who in their culture are so closely related to the Choroti. The fact that the rattling dancing-staffs form a magical instrument peculiar to the Chaco tribes, may also be inferred from the puberty ceremonies in vogue among the *Lenguas* of Paraguay. These ceremonies are shortly described by Mr. Barbrooke Grubb, but since he gives no explanation of their significance I may mention them in this connection, with more reason since the Lenguas are culturally closely related to the Indians of the Mataco-Choroti group. The main dance is, as among the Choroti, performed by the women who circle round the girl to be initiated, chanting and marking time with their rattle staffs. A troop of lads, dressed in ostrich plumes and wearing masks to represent evil spirits, issue from the forest, running one behind the other in a serpentine formation, move in and out among the crowd, jingling bunches of hoofs and from time to time uttering prolonged shrill cries. At their near approach the women dance and chant with increasing vigour round the girl pretending to protect her and to drive off the masked »spirits» [1]). The idea just indicated by me with regard to the Choroti, namely, that the young woman will, through the initiation, become permanently har-

[1]) Grubb, *op. cit.* p. 178.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

Choroti SK6

M 796 535 [177]

I have so far only spoken of the dances and other rites which take place at the preparation of the sacred drinks. During the algaroba season festivals are held almost continuously, and these festivals are chiefly celebrated with drinking-bouts and dancing. Those of the Chaco Indians who have been in contact with the whites and seen the great festival with which, in Argentine and Boliva, they celebrate their carnival in February say that the algaroba season is their own carnival time and that they, too, have their carnival dances. The dances which among the Choroti take place at that time have partly been described before in connection with the customs practised by these Indians at courtship and marriage. In addition to the customary courtship dance *Avúshe*, the great festival, which is called *lākinene*, is celebrated with two more dances, those called *Ahlénta* and *Jóhlōki*. *Jóhlōki* is the name by which the Choroti call the Tobas, a fact that seems to indicate that the Choroti have borrowed the dance from their neighbours. The Tobas themselves call the dance *Nahotti*. It is a ring-dance; the dancing men are arranged in a circle and have their arms round each other's waists, moving round to the right or to the left to the rhythm of a chant. The *Ahlénta* again is identical with the Toba dance *Nomi*. Nevertheless, the Choroti seem to have borrowed it from their southern neighbours, the Ashluslay Indians on the lower Pilcomayo, a fact that may be inferred from the name; for just as *Jóhlōki* means »the Toba dance», so *Ahlénta* means »the Ashluslay dance» (Choroti *Ahle* = Ashluslay). I would add in this connection that the dances of the Chaco tribes are, in the main, common to all the tribes; there are certain dances which occur among different tribes under different names.

C 796 535

C 533 535 796

The chants sung at the dances are rather monotonous and are composed of a series of words which apparently have no meaning; for instance in the *Jóhlōki*:

Hä-e-sa-alia,
Hiáh-hia-ália,
He-éh-hia-ália, hia-ália,
Hi-áh,
Hä-he-éh, hä-he-éh,
Hä-se-éh, hä-se-éh, hä-se-éh, etc.

C 796 535

Only the younger unmarried men perform these dances, the older ones being constantly engaged in drinking algaroba beer (*atäs*). Unmarried girls are allowed to be present, but as we have seen they do not as a rule